

## **Natural & Working Lands Working Group Meeting Notes December 6, 2019**

The Working Group was welcomed by co-chairs Amanda Beal and Tom Abello.

Facilitator Jo D Saffair discussed the updated work plan and schedule (1/3/20-PM: natural lands focus; 1/10/20-AM: snow date; 2/7/20 – agriculture focus). New Working Group members and public attendees introduced themselves.

Tom Abello noted that DEP is still gathering emissions profile data and will present results at the January meeting.

### **Mark Berry and Andy Whitman presented an overview of the role of forests in carbon sequestration.**

- Maine is 89% forested
- 93% of forests are in private ownership
- 10 largest owners/managers control 8 million acres of forests
- 86,000 family owners hold 10 acres or more of forestland
- in 20 years, conserved lands have increased from 6% to 20% of the state (primarily in conservation easements)
- Maine forests store 1.47 billion metric tons of carbon
- forest carbon is 300 times Maine's annual emissions
- fastest rate of sequestration is in forests between 20 and 80 years old
- most Maine forests are 20-100 years old; only 7% are over 100 years old
- other New England states' forests have much higher carbon density than Maine
- there is a huge climate advantage to producing higher-value, longer-lived wood products
- forest cover is decreasing by 23 acres per day, or about 8,400 acres per year
- a 1% increase in forest carbon would equal 3 times Maine's annual emissions
- there is a need for a climate-friendly forest economy

### **DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- 68% of Maine's forest industry is in the pulpwood economy, which has significant economic benefits
- tension between postponing harvest for carbon gains vs. harvesting fast-growing short-lived trees for profit
- NRCS is interested in assisting landowners with forest carbon sequestration
- does any other sector have a net positive carbon impact? Or even neutral? Probably not
- forestry is not an emitter; everyone else must do their part
- 2045 goal is simplistic and may have unintended consequences
- how is Maine losing 23 acres of forests per day?
- most likely from development in southern and central Maine; possibly some agricultural conversions
- development pressure is not in the industrial forests
- there is insufficient carbon storage in small woodlots
- want to see data, maps, trends on this issue
- Forest Society works on easement donations; lacks funding for outright purchases of forest land
- based on US Forest Service data, more than a 1% increase in stocking is needed
- fastest carbon accretion occurs in young trees; more active forest management is needed
- good forest management is essential
- soil disturbance in forests from management activities can have an adverse impact on carbon storage
- it is hard to accumulate carbon

- most of our forests are young; we don't need to create more young forests
- we could grow forests faster if we used smaller equipment and had markets for the wood
- if we could affordably thin stands earlier, we could increase growth

**Jo D Saffair asked if the Work Group wanted to clarify desired outcomes or discuss specific strategies.**

- what is our goal? Is it no-net loss? Increased carbon sequestration? Status quo? It's not clear
- the Governor does not want the status quo
- status quo cannot be guaranteed
- Maine forests are globally significant – this is powerful – need to think globally
- the legislative charge is to work with other sectors to reduce greenhouse gases by 80%
- what would work for industry and contribute to state climate goals?
- Karin Tilberg's written proposal looks interesting
- we need a goal; we can't define strategies without a goal
- we don't know what we have to accomplish on GHG reductions in this Working Group
- we have opportunities to replace plastics with wood products
- we may expand sawlog production, but will still do a lot of pulpwood
- we need more data
- it's hard to articulate a specific goal for natural and working lands
- conceptually, all sectors can improve and contribute – embrace opportunities
- 8300 acres per year forest loss is sobering
- any modest improvement on 90% of landscape (forests) would be powerful
- the top 10 forest landowners could move the needle easily; what are their plans?
- celebrate the carbon storage that is already happening in Maine forests
- work with landowners to find simple effective management improvements
- landowner incentives are needed
- what are other states doing to incentivize forest landowners?
- 8300 acres of annual forest loss seems small – about 0.04% of forest acreage?
- we need incentives for landowners and loggers to improve forest management
- we may need a carbon tax to pay for incentives
- markets are the best incentive to create better forest management
- look at [Forests On The Edge](#) reports on threats from development
- we have a statewide goal for carbon reductions; each Working Group should contribute
- suggest looking at Mark Berry's 3 desired outcomes and go on to discussing strategies
- spend 10 minutes focusing on goals
- it's hard to farm around forests; harvesting equipment is expensive; incentivize farmers to do better woodlot management

**Jo D Saffair – compilation of values**

- put strategy ideas in a “parking lot” document to edit as we proceed
- Mark Berry's stated goals (revisited as suggested above):
  1. Retain forest land
  2. Improve forest condition
  3. Provide a climate-friendly forest economy
- something is missing on our purpose
- these are strategies, not goals
- what would it take to maintain status quo or increase carbon by 5% or 10%?
- we need to meet the Climate Council goals
- we will have access to technical assistance on cost-benefit analysis

- reluctant to set goals; we are working in a vacuum
- forestry and agriculture should not have to solve everyone else's issues
- expected to see discussion of strategies today
- it may be better to have more discussion on other sectors first

**Jo D Saffeir – initial discussion of a few strategies**

**Karin Tilberg – draft concept on voluntary landowner incentive program [see Tilberg document]**

- landowner sets his/her own goals to increase stocking levels
- carbon markets are too complicated for small woodlot owners
- landowner payments at 10-year intervals based on performance
- collect funds from offset providers to finance the program

**DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- this will have a cost but seems doable
- increased stocking requires improved management
- concerns about landowners gaming the system – needs some rigor to keep it honest
- a few landowners already have invested in improved management
- how should early adopters be treated?
- how is this different from the existing Tree Growth Act?
- would foresters ensure that practices are maintained?
- investors need assurances of long-term maintenance of practices; how to foresee 100 years?
- 100-year provision is based on the California regulatory market
- Maine Forest Products Council will prepare a white paper for the Working Group
- 100-year commitment is a long timeframe; conditions can change
- need to adjust to species conditions, budworm problems, etc.
- harvesting contractors may need incentives as well

**Alec Giffen – New England Forestry Foundation suggestions**

**DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- intensifying and improving forest management would be a good thing
- can we afford to do it? What are the incentives?
- what about by-products from new management techniques?
- assume that future markets will be different from current ones
- financial rewards must line up with improved practices
- wood building initiative is excellent
- other NEFF proposals will have challenges with landowners
- get smaller landowners interested in improved forest management
- look at Outcome-Based Forestry, current use taxation
- review IPCC statement on improved forest management
- cash payments aren't the only incentives
- don't disincentivize those who would act without incentives
- need to hear more from loggers and the forest industry
- loggers have already implemented greenhouse gas reductions with new, expensive equipment
- equipment doesn't work equally well in all landscapes
- loggers need a return on investment for new or specialized equipment
- there are no existing incentives for this type of investment
- what about forest management of public lands?
  - this will be discussed at the January meeting

**Public Comments:**

- discussed US Climate Alliance Regional Learning Lab mentioned American Forestry Foundation Family Forest Carbon Program
- are industrial forest owners really replanting trees?
- Working Group needs to hear from major forest landowners on their long-term strategies
- N&WL Working Group needs to integrate with other MCC Working Groups
- recommended [Sandboxing Nature](#) for innovative processes
- experiment with innovative technology and financing to see what might work
- consider increasing ecological reserves by 25% -- this would be a known cost vs. the uncertainties of incentives for diverse landowners

**Next Meeting: forests, natural lands, water resources**

- look at DEP Climate Action Plan updates spreadsheet
- share what other states are doing
- discussion of public vs. private ownership, working vs. non-working lands